



CAL FIRE

Fire and Emergency Response

The CAL FIRE Mission

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection protects the people of California from fires, responds to emergencies, and protects and enhances forest, range, and watershed values while providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to rural and urban citizens.

People to Meet the Challenge

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is known for its extraordinary response to emergencies. The department is always ready to respond regardless of the emergency - wildland fires; structure fires; automobile accidents; medical aids; swift water rescues; civil disturbances; lost hikers; hazardous material spills; train wrecks; floods; earthquakes; and even terrorist attacks. CAL FIRE's firefighters, fire engines and aircraft respond to over 5,600 wildland fires, and answer the call more than 350,000 times for other emergencies each year. Department personnel and equipment are a familiar site throughout the state with responsibility for protecting over 31 million acres of California's privately owned wildlands, and for emergency services of all kinds in 35 of California's 58 counties through contracts with local governments. The heart of CAL FIRE's emergency response capability is a force of nearly 4,700 full-time fire professionals, foresters, and administrative employees; 2,200 seasonal firefighters; 5,600 local government volunteer firefighters; 2,600 Volunteers in Prevention; and 4,300 inmates and wards that currently provide 196 fire crews.



Facilities Throughout the State

The department is divided into four regions with 21 administrative units statewide. Within these units, CAL FIRE operates 806 fire stations (228 state and 575 local government). CAL FIRE, in collaboration with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, is authorized to operate 39 conservation camps, and three training centers, located throughout the state. CAL FIRE staffs 13 air attack bases and 9 helitack bases that allow aircraft to reach most fires within 20 minutes.

Equipment to do the Job

CAL FIRE operates over 1,095 fire engines (336 state and 759 local government); 215 rescue squads; 63 paramedic units; 12 hazmat units; 38 aerial ladder trucks; 58 bulldozers; 5 mobile communication centers; and 11 mobile kitchen units. The department funds, via contract, an additional 82 engines, and 12 bulldozers used in six counties - Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Orange, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. From the air, CAL FIRE operates 23 1,200 gallon airtankers (one is kept as maintenance relief), 11 Super Huey helicopters (two are kept as maintenance relief), and 14 airtactical planes (one is kept as maintenance relief).

Cooperation Among Agencies

In a state as large and populated as California, cooperative efforts via contracts and agreements between state, federal, and local agencies are essential to respond to emergencies like wildland and structure fires, floods, earthquakes, hazardous material spills, and medical aids. The CAL FIRE cooperative fire protection program staff coordinates those agreements and contracts. Because of these types of cooperative efforts fire engines and crews from many different agencies may respond at the scene of an emergency.



The Highest Standards of Training



The Office of the State Fire Marshal, State Fire Training, and CAL FIRE Academy programs provide training education and certification programs to the California Fire Service. Through practical training exercises and classroom courses, every California firefighter is exposed to training standards that have been approved by CAL FIRE and the OSFM, each among the best institutions in the nation for fire training education. Offering more than 1,000 classes annually, State Fire Training programs reach over 24,000 students each year and have issued more than 100,000 certifications to members of the more than 900 California fire departments, including CAL FIRE. Each year over 2,000 CAL FIRE personnel attend the CAL FIRE Academy in Lone, California participating in courses ranging from basic fire control and arson investigation, to leadership development and forest practice enforcement.

Learning to Live With Fire

California must do more than just suppress wildfires once they start. Reducing the risk of large wildfires, the costs of fighting wildfires, and loss of property and natural resources are the goals of CAL FIRE's fire prevention and planning programs. Driven by the California Fire Plan, developed by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and CAL FIRE over 10 years ago as a proactive approach to meet those goals, the department continues to be a leader in emphasizing community involvement, and developing and implementing pre-fire management solutions. Pre-fire management activities include fuel breaks, fire safe landscaping, removal of hazardous vegetation, and inspections for fire safe clearance around homes. Educating communities and homeowners on fire safety is a statewide effort led by the department's communications program. The program provides fire safety information via television, radio, print and the internet. The CAL FIRE Volunteers in Prevention (VIP) Program includes over 2,600 citizen volunteers throughout the state. These VIPs donate their time, under the supervision of CAL FIRE, to teach children and adults basic fire and life safety measures. Most CAL FIRE units have established local fire safe councils to bring together citizens, local fire agencies, local governments, and other groups affected by wildfire such as insurance companies. The challenge of living in a fire prone state such as California is everyone's responsibility.

Fire and Resource Assessment

Current information on the supply, availability and condition of California's forest and rangeland resources is needed to develop appropriate policies to ensure the health and productivity of these wildlands. The FRAP unit identifies emerging resource issues on wildlands; analyzes the results of different types of land use and management on wildland conditions; and reviews and evaluates policies by federal, state and local agencies as they relate to wildland protection. FRAP also identifies and analyzes policy options for the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection through demographic and other types of data, including information on vegetation, wildlife, soils, watersheds, fire behavior, and ownership.

Preventing Fires to Keep You Safe

The programs of the CAL FIRE Office of the State Fire Marshal are geared toward providing fire safety where people live, work and congregate. OSFM staff develop, interpret and enforce fire safety codes and laws covering state-owned and occupied buildings; fire extinguishers; fireworks, flame retardant chemicals; hazardous liquid pipelines; building materials; power lines; railroads; film industry activities; laboratory accreditation; and vapor recovery systems.



Enforcing Laws

To enforce state fire and forest laws, CAL FIRE Law Enforcement Program staff are trained and certified in accordance with California Peace Officer Standardized Training (POST). CAL FIRE investigators determine wildland fire causes, interview witnesses, issue citations and set up surveillance operations. Additionally, law enforcement staff provides assistance when requested by local fire and law enforcement agencies in arson, bomb, fireworks, and fire extinguisher investigations, as well as disposal of explosives. OSFM Arson and Bomb Specialists provide fire and bomb investigation services to state-owned facilities, and provide assistance to local government fire and law agencies. Department investigators have a very successful conviction rate.